

Impact of Satisfaction with Sales Supervisor on Offering Client Value and Customer-Oriented Selling

By Charles H. Schwepker, Jr., Roberta J. Schultz, and David J. Good

The nature of the sales unit is organizationally unique in that it requires individual performance of the unit members (salespeople), yet the success of the total group (e.g., sales district) relies on effective interactions between salespeople and sales managers. In this setting, this study explores the impacts of satisfaction with the sales supervisor on critical strategic selling approaches (seller's commitment to providing client value) and its eventual impact on a customer-oriented selling approach. To accomplish this goal, 273 business-to-business salespeople were surveyed. Managerial and future research implications are presented.

INTRODUCTION

Customer perceived value is defined as, "the difference between the benefits and the sacrifices (e.g. the total costs, both monetary and non-monetary) perceived by customers in terms of their expectations, i.e. needs and wants" (Lapierre 2000, p. 123). Creating customer value appears to be a means for developing highly satisfied and loyal customers (Lam et al. 2004). With this in mind, Blocker et al. (2012) develop a framework outlining the role of the salesforce in creating customer value, satisfaction and retention. The framework outlines the means by which salespeople both create and appropriate customer value through salesperson relational processes intended to satisfy customers' expressed and latent needs. Similarly, Guenzi, De Luca and Troilo (2011) sought to better understand the customer value creation process. In their study of 870 managers, they found that culture, strategy, structure and systems all affect customer-oriented selling, which in turn affects superior customer value creation. Thus, customer-oriented selling appears to play a significant role in customer value creation. While very instructive,

both studies fall short of detailing all means by which front-line sales managers may influence salespeople in the value creation process. Given that sales managers influence the attitudes and behaviors of salespeople, the purpose of this study is to extend this research by focusing on one attitude sales managers can directly influence, satisfaction with themselves, and examine how this might influence salesperson commitment to providing superior customer value (CSCV) and ultimately customer-oriented selling.

While Guenzi, De Luca and Troilo (2011) examined high level organizational drivers directly related to customer-oriented selling and value creation, our study more closely examines management impacts at the individual level driving salesperson values and behaviors aimed at creating customer value. Given the important influence of salesperson's satisfaction in supervisory work attitudes and behaviors, we focus on its influence in affecting salespeople's commitment to providing superior customer value. Managers can influence salespeople's satisfaction with them through supervisory behaviors (Kohli 1985) and control mechanisms (Challagalla and Shervani 1996). We are interested in understanding how salespeople's satisfaction with these supervisory behaviors and mechanisms impact their dedication to providing superior customer value. We believe that salespeople who are committed to providing superior customer value will exhibit greater customer-oriented selling.

Charles H. Schwepker, Jr. (Ph.D., University of Memphis), Mike and Patti Davidson Distinguished Marketing Professor, Harmon College of Business & Professional Studies, University of Central Missouri, Schwepker@ucmo.edu

Roberta J. Schultz (Ph.D., University of Missouri), Senior Lecturer, University of Arizona, Professor of Marketing, Emeritus, Western Michigan University, Roberta.schultz@wmich.edu

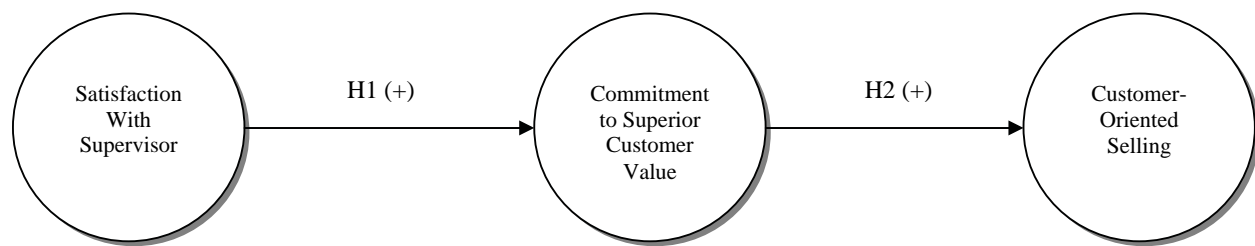
David J. Good (Ph.D., University of Arkansas), Professor of Marketing, Emeritus, Seidman College of Business, Grand Valley State University, goodd@gvsu.edu

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This study is important because it examines the impacts of perceived personal qualities of the sales manager on several important aspects of subordinate performance. Given that sales managers and salespeople interact constantly, the possibility that such personal interactions would have strong impacts on performance represents a unique, but important insight into sales organizations (Shannahan, Shannahan, and Bush 2013). Sales managers have critical roles in influencing their organizations (Chakrabarty, Brown, and Widing 2012), indicating this study offers a valuable opportunity to explore seller performance in the very distinctive personal frameworks that exist within the sales unit.

Included in this examination of 273 business-to-business salespeople, the theoretical background for the study is presented, along with the findings of the study, managerial and theoretical implications and suggestions for future research. Figure 1 depicts the proposed hypotheses which are supported in the following section.

Figure 1
Hypothesized Relationships Among Study Variables



THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Satisfaction with Sales Supervisor & Commitment to Providing Superior Customer Value

Guenzi and Troilo (2007, p. 101) define superior customer value creation as “the ability to creatively, proactively and rapidly create and transfer benefits to customers, as well as to solve customer problems, thus reducing what they perceive as sacrifice.” Seller offered value propositions are likely to be unique to any given customer as reflected by any number of ways in which it may be achieved, with the goal to improve the customer’s perceived cost-benefit ratio. Extensive research conducted by the HR Chally Group, for instance, suggests that business customers are looking for salespeople who take personal accountability for their results, are an advocate for them, understand their business, are easily accessible, are knowledgeable of applications, solve their problems and are innovate in response to their needs (Stevens and Kinni 2007). Salespeople may distinctively execute any of these

actions to increase perceived customer value. In doing so, the overall value of the customer to the selling organization may be increased (Palmatier 2008).

Commitment to providing superior customer value is conceptually similar to both organizational commitment and employee commitment to service quality (Hartline and Ferrell 1996; Schwepker and Hartline 2005; Weeks et al. 2004, 2006). Commitment involves a strong dedication or devotion to some referent. From a managerial perspective, Morrow (1983) identified over 25 commitment related concepts and measures and distilled them into six categories: personal values, careers, job, organization, union and combinations of these five. Among these, attitudinal organizational commitment is the most frequently studied type of commitment (Mathieu and Zajac 1990).

Employee commitment to service quality is a form of attitudinal commitment that specifies the strength of one’s dedication to providing quality service to an organization’s customers (cf., Ahmed and Parasuraman 1994). However, unlike commitment to providing

superior value, which may be achieved in a variety of ways, commitment to service quality focuses on providing high quality service, which is only one means for delivering superior customer value. Furthermore, value is believed to be cocreated through customer-supplier encounter processes as the parties involved jointly learn, dialogue, identify, and act on opportunities to create value (Payne, Storbacka and Frow 2008). Drawing from these two conceptualizations of commitment, this study therefore defines commitment to providing superior customer value as the strength of an individual's devotion to providing superior *value* to customers. Thus, it involves a personal, affective commitment to improve the value offered to customers.

The concept of job satisfaction has been defined as “the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job” (Locke 1969, p. 316). It is believed to be comprised of several facets, including satisfaction with one's supervisor (Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1977). To focus more specifically on the role of the supervising sales manager in salesperson value creation, this study focuses on only one dimension of job satisfaction, satisfaction with supervisor. Results of a meta-analysis indicate that job satisfaction positively affects salespeople's attitudinal organizational commitment (Brown and Peterson 1993). Likewise, this relationship appears to hold when examining satisfaction with supervisors (Azeem 2010, Malik et al. 2010; Fu, Deshpande and Zhao 2011; Sager and Johnston 1989). While these support a general relationship between satisfaction with supervisor and one type of attitudinal commitment (i.e., organizational), social exchange theory (Blau 1964) provides a basis for job satisfaction's relationship with commitment to providing superior customer value. Social exchange theory is based on the assertion that an individual is obligated to reciprocate to a satisfying service given to that individual (Blau 1964). In this case, the salesperson feels obligated to create customer value in return for various supervisor behaviors (e.g., supporting, listening, managing, providing feedback and career guidance, rewards and recognition, good overall treatment). A relational contract is established by which an ongoing relationship exists between two parties (e.g., salesperson and sales manager) involving the exchange of both monetary and nonmonetary benefits (Rousseau 1989). This type of relationship

appears to be manifested in the service-profit chain which indicates that satisfied service employees bring about greater customer service value (Heskett et al. 1994). Based on this evidence, we propose

H1: There is a positive relationship between satisfaction with the supervisor and commitment to providing superior customer value.

Commitment to Providing Superior Customer Value and Customer-Oriented Selling

Customer-oriented selling has been defined as “the degree to which salespeople practice the marketing concept by trying to help their customers make purchase decisions that will satisfy customer needs” (Saxe and Weitz, 1982, p. 344) and its practice appears to be aimed at developing enduring customer relationships (Schwepker 2003). Highly customer-oriented salespeople demonstrate concern for others, while those low in customer orientation care primarily for themselves (Saxe and Weitz, 1982). Recent research involving *managers* suggests use of customer-oriented selling is positively related to superior customer value creation (Guenzi, De Luca and Troilo 2011).

The proposed relationship between salesperson commitment to providing superior customer value and customer-oriented selling is predicated on research showing a positive relationship between customer-oriented selling and organizational commitment. A review of salesperson customer-oriented selling finds a positive relationship between organizational commitment and customer-oriented selling (Schwepker 2003). As previously mentioned, salesperson commitment to providing superior customer value is conceptually similar to organizational commitment, which has been defined as a form of job engagement (Zablah et al. 2012). Job engagement is a “positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker 2002, p. 74). As such, boundary spanning employees who are highly committed to the organization focus on customer-oriented behaviors as a means for helping their organizations further their goals (Huang and Dastmalchian 2006; O'Hara, Boles and Johnston 1991). Similarly, commitment to providing superior customer

value could be viewed as a form of job engagement. Thus, it is anticipated to increase customer-oriented selling since salespeople who are devoted to their roles will place a premium on satisfying customer needs. Furthermore, the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980) suggests that one's behavior (i.e., customer-oriented value creating selling behaviors) is generally consistent with one's attitude (i.e., commitment to superior customer value). Thus, it is suggested that

H2: *There is a positive relationship between salesperson commitment to providing superior customer value and customer-oriented selling.*

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection

A leading national data collection organization was used to conduct a nationwide survey of business-to-business salespeople. Salespeople in the organization's database were sent an email inviting them to participate in the survey (see Table 2 for questionnaire scale items). As a result, 1,989 salespeople accessed our electronic survey via the Web. An initial question was used to determine if the salesperson sold business-to-business. Consequently, 1,680 respondents who accessed the survey were eliminated after answering the initial screening question, leaving 309 respondents to continue with the survey. After examining the data for incomplete responses, a final sample of 273 business-to-business salespeople remained. A time-trend extrapolation test (Armstrong and Overton 1977) using demographic, classification and measurement variables indicates that nonresponse bias is unlikely a problem ($F = 1.22$, significance $F = 0.270$).

The sample is comprised of primarily males (60.1%) who average 43.3 years of age. Nearly one third (32.2%) have a high school degree or some college, while 67.8% are college graduates. On average, the percent of commission pay for this sample is 32.3% and they average 17.9 years of sales experience. Most respondents (39.2%) work for firms selling primarily physical goods, while 24.2% work for those selling primarily services and 36.6% work for those selling both. Respondents are compensated via salary (42.1%), commission (21.2%) or a combination of salary,

commission and bonus (36.7%). These salespeople are employed by services (45.4%), wholesaling (25.6%), manufacturing (26.4%), and nonprofit (2.6%) organizations in a variety of industries.

Operationalization of Study Variables

Satisfaction with supervisor (SS) assesses the extent to which salespeople are satisfied with various behaviors of their supervising manager. This scale was developed from Valentine (2009). In addition, new items were added to incorporate the main functions of a supervisor including communication, managing, showing interest in their career, rewards and recognition and feedback. Respondents were asked to provide the extent to which they are satisfied with their supervising manager by responding to eight five-point Likert-type statements ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree."

Reichers (1985) has suggested that Mowday et al.'s (1979) organizational commitment questionnaire can be justifiably modified to reflect commitment to other work related entities. Comparable to Hartline and Ferrell (1996) and Weeks et al. (2004), this study adapted Mowday et al.'s (1979) affective commitment items to assess salespeople's *commitment to providing superior customer value* (CSCV). Salespeople responded to nine items that used a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree".

Customer-Oriented Selling (COS) was assessed using the five customer-oriented items from a reduced ten-item version of the Saxe and Weitz (1982) SOCO scale developed by Thomas, Soutar and Ryan (2001). Participants responded to the items using a five-point scale anchored with (1) "True for none of your customers-NEVER" and (5) "True for ALL of your customers-ALWAYS". Reliability and validity of the scale has been demonstrated (Thomas, Soutar and Ryan 2001; Wachner, Plouffe and Gregoire 2009).

Measure Assessment

Reliability and validity were assessed for each scale. Each scale's Cronbach (1951) alpha indicates satisfactory reliability with coefficient alphas above .70 (Nunnally 1978). The descriptive statistics, reliabilities (along the diagonal) and intercorrelations for the variables used in the study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities
and Intercorrelation Matrix of Variables in the Study

	SS	CSCV	COS
Mean	5.01	4.24	4.30
Standard Deviation	1.40	0.66	0.71
Satisfaction with Supervisor	(.96)		
Commitment to Superior Customer Value	0.28**	(.91)	
Customer-Oriented Selling	0.16*	0.82**	(.92)
**significant at 0.01			
*significant at 0.05			

Convergent and discriminant validity of the measures was examined via confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 16 (Arbuckle 2007). Statistically significant t-values (greater than 2.0) for the parameter estimates (Table 2) indicate convergent validity (Anderson and Gerbing 1988) (two items from the commitment scale, CSCV5 and CSCV8, were dropped due to factor loadings below .60). The proportion of variation in the indicators captured by the underlying construct is higher than the variance due to measurement error, providing further evidence of convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Each construct's average variance extracted exceeds a suggested critical value of .50 (Fornell and Larcker 1981).

Evidence of discriminant validity is found in Table 3 that shows the 95 percent confidence intervals for the correlations between each pair of study constructs does not contain the value of 1.0 (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Furthermore, we conducted one-at-a-time chi-square difference tests between pairs of the constructs to test for discriminant validity. Discriminant validity is found when the fit of the two construct model is significantly better than that of a one construct model when subjecting the construct items to confirmatory factor analysis (Hair et al. 2006). The two construct model comprised of commitment to customer value and customer-oriented selling produced a X^2 of 201.7, $df =$

53, $p = .000$, while the one construct model has a X^2 of 296.4, $df = 54$, $p = .000$, for a X^2 difference of 94.7, indicating a significantly better fit for the two construct model. Similarly, the two construct model comprised of satisfaction with supervisor and customer-oriented selling ($X^2 = 248.8$, $df = 64$, $p = .000$) differs in X^2 by 869.2 from its one construct model ($X^2 = 1,118.7$, $df = 65$, $p = .000$), while the two construct model comprised of satisfaction with supervisor and commitment to customer value ($X^2 = 339.6$, $df = 894$, $p = .000$) differs in X^2 by 1,007.2 from its one construct model ($X^2 = 1,346.8$, $df = 90$, $p = .000$), both indicating significantly better fit for the two construct models.

Common method variance was tested using confirmatory factor analysis by allowing all the study items to load on one factor. Results show that all of the measurement items do not load on a single factor as indicated by poor fit statistics for this model ($X^2 = 2,844.45$, $df = 170$, $p = .000$, CFI = .464, NFI = .451, RMR = .621), suggesting common method variance is not a serious problem. Additionally, similar to Griffith and Lusch (2007), a partial correlation procedure was conducted by adding a variable to the model this is expected to be theoretically unrelated to the variables in the model (Lindell and Whitney 2001). Education was added to the model and was not found to be significantly related to any of the other variables, again suggesting that common method

Table 2
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results: Factor Loadings and t-Values

	Factor Loading	t- Value
<i>Satisfaction with Supervisor</i> (based on Valentine, 2009)		
I am satisfied with the way my supervising manager . . .		
SS1 backs me up	.857	----- ^a
SS2 listens to me	.913	21.56
SS3 treats me.	.886	20.25
SS4 communicates with me.	.907	21.26
SS5 does his/her job of managing.	.874	19.71
SS6 shows interest in my career.	.889	20.41
SS7 provides rewards and recognition.	.779	16.09
SS8 provides feedback.	.881	20.01
<i>Customer-Oriented Selling</i> (Thomas, Soutar and Ryan 2001)		
CO1 I try to get customers to discuss their needs with me.	.753	-----
CO2 A good salesperson has to have the customer's best interests in mind.	.708	11.97
CO3 I try to bring a customer with a problem together with a product that helps solve that problem.	.869	15.13
CO4 I offer the product of mine that is best suited to the customer's problem.	.868	15.12
CO5 I try to find out what kind of product would be most helpful to a customer.	.883	15.43
<i>Commitment to Providing Superior Customer Value</i> (Adapted from Mowday et al.1979)		
CCV1 I feel strongly about improving the value provided to our organization's customers.	.864	-----
CCV2 I enjoy discussing issues related to delivering superior customer value with people in my organization.	.615	11.28
CCV3 I gain a sense of personal accomplishment in providing superior value to my customers.	.837	17.93
CCV4 I completely understand the importance of providing superior value to our customers.	.771	15.62
CCV6 Providing superior value to our customers should be the number one priority of my organization.	.678	12.88
CCV7 I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help my organization deliver superior value to our customers.	.799	16.58
CCV9 I really care about the value provided to customers by my organization.	.808	16.87

Notes: ^aconstrained to 1.0; $p < 0.001$ for each factor loading

CFI = .925, NFI = .895, RMR = .082, $X^2 = 543.41$, $df = 167$, $p = .000$

Table 3
Discriminant Validity:
Average Variance Extracted, Shared Variance, Confidence Interval

	Shared Variance	Confidence Interval
SS (.764)* < --- > CSCV (.596)	.078	-.059 to .209
SS < --- > COS (.672)	.026	-.097 to .135
CSCV < --- > COS	.672	.697 to .877

*The average variance extracted for each construct is in parentheses

variance is not a major concern. Finally, the research design incorporated numerous facets (physical separation of constructs on the questionnaire; ensuring respondents that there are no right or wrong answers; anonymity; using different scale formats with unambiguous scale items; and not using bipolar numerical scale values) that diminish the potential of common method variance (Podsakoff et al. 2003).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Before estimating the hypothesized model, multicollinearity was examined by calculating the variance inflation factor (VIF) for each variable using multiple regression analysis. Multicollinearity is not a problem if the VIF, the inverse of $(1 - R^2)$, is close to 1.00 (Hair et al. 2006). A VIF value of 10.00 or less is considered acceptable (Hair et al. 2006). The VIF for both SS and CSCV is 1.0, suggesting that little multicollinearity exists among the variables.

Structural equation modeling with AMOS 16 (Arbuckle 2007) was used to test the hypotheses. Based on the characteristics of the sample and model, the fit statistics provided in Table 4 suggest that the model adequately fits the data (see Hair et al. 2006 for suggested fit statistics). With many factors believed to affect customer-oriented selling, the failure to find a perfect

fit is not surprising. Hypothesis one suggesting a positive relationship between salesperson satisfaction with supervisor and commitment to providing superior customer value is supported ($\beta = .252$, $p < .001$). Thus, the more satisfied salespeople are with their supervisor, the more committed they can expect to be to providing superior customer value. Likewise, support was found for hypothesis two that proposed a positive relationship between commitment to providing superior customer value and salespeople's use of customer-oriented selling ($\beta = .885$, $p < .001$). Salespeople who are committed to providing superior value are likely to practice customer-oriented selling behaviors to help deliver such value.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Hypothesis one, showing a positive relationship between satisfaction with the supervisor and commitment to providing superior customer value, supports previous research showing a relationship between job satisfaction and commitment (Brown and Peterson 1993), is consistent with findings on supervisory satisfaction (e.g., Azeem 2010, Malik et al. 2010; Fu, Deshpande and Zhao 2011; Sager and Johnston 1989) and tends to provide additional support for social exchange theory (Blau 1964). Importantly, this finding goes beyond this

Table 4
Final Path Model
Structural Parameter Estimates

Path	Hypothesis	Coeff.	t-value	R ²
SS → CSCV	H ₁ (+)	.252	4.00	.064
CSCV → COS	H ₂ (+)	.885	13.38	.784
Goodness-of-fit Statistics:		$\chi^2 = 551.73$ d.f. = 168, $p = .000$ CFI = .923 NFI = .893 RMR = .088		

and suggests that job satisfaction, and more specifically, satisfaction with one's supervisor, can likewise enhance salesperson commitment to providing superior customer value. This finding broadens our understanding of the satisfaction - commitment relationship, particularly as it enhances our understanding of the means by which management may influence organizational members' commitment that extends beyond the organization and to the customer. Furthermore, this finding adds to and extends our understanding of the role of the salesforce in customer value creation (Blocker et al. 2012). We learn that by taking actions to enhance salespeople's satisfaction with them, sales managers can elevate their salespeople's desire to provide superior customer value. This is consistent with the service-profit chain that suggests that satisfied service employees bring about greater customer service value (Heskett et al. 1994).

We also learned that there is a positive relationship between salesperson commitment to providing superior customer value and customer-oriented selling (hypothesis two). This is consistent with research showing a positive relationship between organizational commitment and customer-oriented selling (Schwepker 2003). However, this finding extends research on customer-oriented selling by finding that salespeople who focus on providing customer value are likely to use a customer-oriented selling approach. It is likely that such an approach manifests at least one means by which salespeople may generate customer value, solving customer problems. Further, our findings extend those of Guenzi, De Luca and Troilo (2011) who found a positive relationship between customer-oriented selling and superior customer value creation among a sample of 870 European marketing managers. Our findings suggest adding commitment to customer value as an antecedent to customer-oriented selling in their conceptual model explaining superior customer value creation.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The model presented in Figure 1 provides important implications to managers, salespeople, and their organizations. Additionally, the implications of this study also impact the connections salespeople have with their buyers.

The importance and practical nature of finding a positive relationship between satisfaction with the supervisor and commitment to providing superior customer value (hypothesis 1) offers meaningful implications to sales organizations. Selling organizations seeking to provide clients superior value now have a method (through the sales manager) to control and direct how this benefit can be delivered to customers. Salesperson satisfaction with the sales manager (e.g., he/she listens to me) impacts relationships with clients through the salesperson providing a commitment to offer clients superior value. Therefore, salespeople view how they are treated, and take the value of this connection (high or low) and "pass" it on to the customer in the form of providing superior value. From a managerial perspective, this means if sellers want to communicate to clients their commitment to value, it can be done through sales managers creating an environment where salespeople are satisfied with their superior. Sales managers therefore wanting to offer such value to customers need to understand how salespeople become satisfied/dissatisfied with their superiors. They can, for example, through coaching expand their understanding of satisfaction levels of sellers (e.g., "what can I do to make your job better?"). Organizations seeking to build such a commitment to buyers need to consider the relationships supervisors have with subordinates in all aspects of the job and understand its impact. This finding suggests issues such as training managers in building and maintaining relationships, coaching, hiring practices of individuals who accept this management style, etc. all play a critical role in the ongoing impact on relational connections with clients.

The significance of hypothesis 2 (a positive relationship between commitment to providing superior customer value and salespeople's use of customer-oriented selling) underscores that salespeople committed to providing superior value should practice customer-oriented selling behaviors to help deliver this value. The importance of this rests with selling organizations wanting to strategically offer value, and how this translates into a focus on utilizing customer-oriented selling as part of the overall selling mix. Therefore, customer-oriented selling is critical for marketing focused firms (Saxe and Weitz 1982) and the findings provide insight into how management can produce a

more customer focused environment. This perspective can be provided through several methods. For example, hiring employees who place an emphasis on wanting to provide value to customers (e.g., how they sell to clients). Secondly, formally training employees to embrace a value focused approach when working with clients, and understanding this is an important offering. Last, managers need to embrace the concept of offering client value in client interactions, and ensure that this point is emphasized to salespeople through coaching and other management interactions (meetings and interactions with salespeople).

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While the paper provides important insights to satisfaction and performance, there are limitations in this study that are important to recognize. These limitations, however, also provide the opportunity to explore new areas for further research framed in the context of this study. As a result, recommendations for areas of future research are discussed below, and included in the dialogue addressing study limitations.

First, the study focused on the perceptions of business-to-business salespeople. Clearly the results are focused on this group, and are not meant to infer any results from other selling groups (e.g., business to consumer). This study does not include sales managers, and instead focuses on the beliefs of salespeople, and how they relate to their selling approaches. The investigation also explores the perceptions of how salespeople believe their managers interact with them. These perceptions are focused on one side of the relationship, and not meant to provide a vision of how sales managers see these issues. It is in this framework that readers understand satisfaction with one's sales manager is a multifaceted concept and any number of factors could determine why salespeople are or are not satisfied with their sales manager. This in turn, could affect how that satisfaction affects their commitment to customer value. Factors such as the selling orientation of the supervisor (i.e. the sales manager's view toward providing customer value), salesforce control systems, incentives for creating customer value, and the length

of the relationship between a salesperson and his or her sales manager, among others, should be examined in future studies to help explain salespeople's satisfaction with their supervisor and how that satisfaction impacts their commitment to customer value.

Additionally, there are specific limitations in this study as to issues that focus on subordinate/manager interactions. This indicates opportunities exist to explore future research opportunities addressing more issues that involve the interactions between sales managers and salespeople, and how these interactions impact performance with both the customer, and the long-term success of the salesperson. For example, future research can explore what personal communicative traits provide stronger coaching to salespeople in varying markets. Are there specific traits of communication styles that fit certain markets better than other selling environments? Thus, the contention of this research is that this study suggests there are other significant opportunities to intertwine personal interactive traits with performance, and these issues should be more closely examined.

In addition, this study did not explore relationships involving the strength of the client value provided by the seller, and their eventual performance customers receive from this selling perspective (it would seem practical that buyers would embrace selling strategies that enhance their performance). The authors propose therefore it would be useful in future studies to examine the relationship between seller's commitment to customer value and a measure of customer performance that the customer receives from engaging in this relationship. Although there is some debate whether customer-oriented selling is a selling style, an aspect of performance or if it affects sales effectiveness, it has been shown to positively affect salesperson job performance (Schwepker 2003). Job performance is also multifaceted, and in part may include relationship development activities. Thus, the significance of a positive relationship between salesperson commitment to providing superior customer value and customer-oriented selling actions that enhance the buyer outcomes should not be ignored since it is likely to create significant selling opportunities.

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